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EVIDENCES

OF

Divine Revelation.

IN A LETTER TO A JUDGE.

BY ICHABOD S. SPENCER, D. D.

BOSTON:
The American Tract Society.
DEPOSITORIES, 28 CORNHILL, BOSTON; AND
13 BIBLE HOUSE, ASTOR PLACE, N. Y.

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PREFACE.

THE following argument for the divine origin and authority of the Scriptures was addressed by the late Dr. Spencer, in 1852, in two letters to a statesman and judge at the West, who had been in early youth one of his parishioners.

This gentleman, when reading law with a distinguished infidel advocate, had imbibed skeptical opinions from the writings of Volney, Godwin, Hume, and others.

During a visit made him by Dr. S., the latter obtained his consent to correspond with him on the Evidences of Divine Revelation. The letters here given were the result. The judge, who was an acute controversialist, would have detected and exposed any fallacy in the argument if there were such. He

returned, however, no reply; but, after receiving it, was frequently seen pondering over his Bible. Though he revealed nothing of the influence upon his mind of the argument which he found it impossible to answer, there is room for the hope that the Holy Spirit may have made it the means of his saving illumination.

The divine and the judge have met at a tribunal where all is light. May the young who have doubts as to the claim of the Scriptures to be the Word of God find in the evidences here presented a confirmation of their faith, and receive that Word into their hearts unto salvation.

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DIVINE REVELATION.

To the Hon. ——. Dear Sir:

IN a recent conversation which your kindness allowed me to have with you, I admired your frankness, when, in answer to some interrogation of mine, you avowed your disbelief of the Bible as a divine revelation; and I beg leave now to express my thanks to you for the permission you kindly gave me to address you on that subject, and for the promise to read what I may write, and let me know what you think about it. I proceed now to avail myself of that permission.

I hope you will not think me transgressing the proprieties of the subject, or want-

ing in due respect to yourself, whom I honor and admire, if I suggest the propriety of *prayer* in connection with the examination of so momentous a matter. If there is a great Being who has made us and governs us, it would seem but a becoming thing to implore his direction, while aiming to learn his will.

The evidences that the Bible is a divine revelation are too numerous, as I think, to be presented in a small space. I propose to mention only a part of them. And pardon me if I add that your great power of mind renders it unnecessary for me to expand, to the full, every argument I shall employ. Your penetration will easily discern its force without any enlargements or expansions of mine.

It is plain that the Bible *claims* to be the

Word of God — a divine revelation. If it is such, it is entitled to an instant and ready obedience; and if it is such, and is therefore to be obeyed, certainly every man of ordinary understanding ought to have good and sufficient reasons for believing it to be such. As I think, there are such reasons. I mention some of them.

I.

THE BIBLE TRUE.

SO far as any human being, by any power, observation, or experience that lies within his reach can test the Bible, so far he positively finds it *true*.

It does indeed contain things which at present he can not test in that way. He can not now be a dead man, and, with a spirit soaring in eternity and communing with other spirits, know, by a spirit's experience, the truth of what the Bible has said about a future existence. He can not now be a man raised from the dead, and, by looking at his emptied grave and leaping with the powers of his renovated "spiritual body" — he can not thus prove the truth of

Christ's declarations, "I am the resurrection and the life," "they that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and come forth." There are extensive chapters of truth in the Bible, which lie at present beyond our experience. But there are other extensive chapters which do not. And what I would now say is this, that, so far as we *can* put them to the test, we do positively find all the things taught in the Bible to be true.

The Bible takes a wide range. That fact itself is very remarkable. The Bible is too venturesome for a forgery. Impostors are more cautious. There never has been any system promulgated among men as truth, and afterwards found out to be falsehood, which *attempted* even to give such delineations of the human heart — such accounts of man's spiritual necessities and

what shall meet them — such extensive rules for man's spirit — such extensive laws and precepts and maxims for the revelation of his private and public life. It will be a new thing under the sun, therefore, if this system shall be found out to be false. The world has never seen anything like it. The exploded systems of fanaticism and falsehood have never ventured as the Bible has ventured into places where history, and hearts, and philosophy, and experience, and consciousness, and observation, and astronomy, and geology, and every family, and every state government, and every individual's self-government might detect the untruth if there were any. But this is only by the way. It does not enter into the essence of my argument.

The Bible takes a wide range. Its delineations of *human character*, besides being

unlike those of any other system, are most strange and startling. It ventures into the inside of every man's heart. It tells him that he is not only a sinner, but an entire and very unworthy sinner. It gives him a very evil character. His passions, his motives, his imaginations, all his moral characteristics, are painted in the Sacred Scriptures with a pen of darkness and gloom, as if an enemy had done it. He is called a fallen creature, envious, high-minded, proud, malicious, hateful, an enemy of God, "evil, only evil, and that continually." What a portraiture! How strange, how horrible! And yet every man that has ever sincerely and extensively examined himself, has found all this to be true. Every such man has *known* it, painfully known it to be true, just as well as he knew he had any heart within him. Thousands, tens of thou-

sands, men of every condition of life, men of refinement and men of ignorance, men of every age and country, have fully known, just as well as they know anything, that the Bible description of their bad hearts is a true description, and that they must "be born again."

It avails nothing to reply that some men have *not* been convinced of this. I beg pardon. It avails much. But this fact only strengthens our argument instead of overthrowing it. Why, the Bible itself has told us that some men would not believe it, and therefore it has told true. And more: it has told us who they are. They are just those men who have given least attention and study to the matter. They are the worldly, the careless, the prayerless, the proud, those who are too much engaged in the occupations or enjoyments of this world

to have much inclination for any moral examination of their own hearts. All this is just as the book which claims to be the Word of God has said it would be.

If any man shall reply that he is not at all conscious of having such an evil heart, what then? What does that prove? What does his *ignorance* weigh against my knowledge? The testimony of a witness in court, who swears he knows nothing about the matter, does not overthrow the testimony of a dozen other witnesses who all swear that they do. The one is simply ignorant; that is all. He tells truth when he says he is ignorant, but his testimony does not touch the case, one way or the other.

Besides, this man who affirms that, by his own consciousness, he has never proved the truth of the Bible declarations about human depravity, would do well to call on

his Christian neighbor over the way, and ask him about it. What will he say? "You don't know as you have got such a wicked heart? Well, I didn't know it once. But the time of conviction came: my eyes were opened, and then I saw. I found it best to look into the matter, and see how the case stood betwixt God and my own soul; and the more I examined the more clearly I saw that my heart was wicked; and saw, too, that I needed the blood of atonement for my pardon, and the Holy Ghost to renew my wicked heart." The Christian man who says this is only an example. Thousands of others are just like him. At one time they were not at all conscious of the corruption of their hearts. Those same men are fully conscious of it now. "Once they were blind: now they see." And all this is just as the book which claims to be

the Word of God has foretold it should be, both with the studious believer and the inattentive unbeliever.

It will not do to reply that these people, who affirm that their own consciousness proves the truth of the Bible declarations about human sinfulness, are deceived persons. How do you *prove* them to be deceived? Why, they are convicted, conscious, of a thing, of which some of their neighbors are not. That is all the proof. But, besides the fact that one man's ignorance is no disproof of another man's knowledge, which of these two classes of men is most likely to have the right of the matter? The one class have given a very imperfect attention to their moral character in God's sight. They seldom talk about it, seldom pray about it. They have not manifested much concern about it. Indeed,

they seldom think of it. To the other class it has been and still is a matter of the most intense concernment. They have been afraid of being deceived about their hearts. They have searched themselves, and prayed God to search them. And after all this, it would be an unreasonable and impudent assumption, to say that man's full consciousness of an evil heart must be set aside as nothing, because there is another class of men that never gave much attention to the subject,— who are yet ignorant of the spirit within them. For, let it be remembered, it is not consciousness against consciousness : it is consciousness against ignorance. It is not consciousness in one class of men that by nature they have bad hearts, opposed to consciousness in another class of men that by nature they have good ones. Far from it. These unbelievers are *not* con-

scious that by nature they love God and love all holiness and godly living, and have *not* depraved hearts. They are only ignorant about the matter — a matter to which they have not much attended; and it is the hight of folly and impudence, therefore, to pretend that their ignorance is to be taken as an offset and a contradiction to the conscious experience and knowledge of another class of men in all respects fully their equals.

There is no way, therefore, to avoid the force of this particular in the argument. Every man that has ever cordially, fully, and sincerely examined the matter, has by his own consciousness known that the Bible is true, so far as it describes his evil natural heart. That many worldly, proud, obstinate, wicked men, who never attended much to the matter, have no such conscious-

ness, amounts to just nothing at all on the point. It is no *proof* of anything, only that they are just as dark and blinded to truth as the Bible has affirmed that such men will be.

The Bible takes a wide range. You may even now test its truth in a thousand other items.

It has, for example, an abundance of *promises*, strange and far-reaching. Men have tried some of them, and found them true. Jesus Christ has promised the weary and heavy laden that if they will come unto him and learn of him, and take his yoke upon them, they shall find rest to their souls. Strange promise, that in this troublous life, knocked about in the world, not knowing what a day shall bring forth, and saddened with the consciousness of a thousand imperfections and sins, the *soul*

shall find rest! But men have tried, and all have found it true. It is the only rest.

There is a remarkable promise in Jeremiah xxix. 12, 13 : "Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me when ye shall search for me with all your heart,"— the truth of which has come under my own observation more frequently and strangely than that of any other promise that I remember. Hundreds of persons have told me that they had tried it and found it true. Once they did not believe it ; now they do. They found God just when they "prayed unto him" and "sought him with all their heart." So of all the promises. Not one gives way. These promises reach the most terrifying circumstances. They reach death. God has promised his faithful peo-

ple to be with them there, and the dying testimony of thousands of them has been given to us that he redeems his promise. On that point men have tested the Bible and found it true.

The Bible takes a wide range. It maintains that the conscience and fears of a sinner shall be quieted, the spiritual storms and tempests of his agitated soul shall be stilled, just by faith in the great atonement. Believers find it so ; all find it so, the world over. It is a fact, peace does come by the blood of the cross. The unbelieving do not understand this. It seems strange to their spirit of self-righteousness, and to their half-way hopes in their good works to commend them to God. But so it is : faith in the great atonement is enough for all the agitations of conscience and fear, — enough to bid defiance to guilt and despair.

The Bible takes a wide range. It points out a course of life which no other book ever commended before it; a course counter to all human inclinations; a course of humility instead of pride, content instead of ambition, forgiveness instead of revenge, generosity instead of covetousness, self-denial instead of self-indulgence, affections on things in heaven instead of things on earth; and then, in the face of those men that can not bear to pocket an insult or part with a privilege, it maintains that the course of its commendations is the fit and righteous course of life. Men have tried it: they have found it so. This course *is* proper. It accords with the character and relationships of men; it promotes at once the virtues and felicities of the world. Herein the Bible has been tested to the last letter, and found true.

Men have also put it to the test of experiment in what relates to *social duties*. It has pointed out the conduct proper for every relationship, and its teaching has been tried. Husbands have tried it; wives have tried it; children, parents, citizens, neighbors, rulers, subjects, magistrates, friends, and enemies have tried it. There never was an instance on the face of the globe wherein it was put to the test of an honest experiment, and the event did not demonstrate that its teaching was true. In respect to every social duty it has told what is best; and when men have tried it they have found it best. On the contrary, when, refusing its instruction, they have chosen to follow their own opposite way, their unrighteousness and unhappiness have been an equal demonstration to the common sense of every beholder, that the Bible was

right and their opposite way wrong, — that the Bible held for the principles of truth, and they followed principles of falsehood, — that the Bible was true to *them*, and they were false to themselves. A disobedient child is such a demonstration: his unhappiness in the end proves that the Bible taught him the truth. An unjust magistrate is such a demonstration: his injustice, destroying at once right and felicity, and thwarting the ends of civil government, prove to every beholder that the Bible taught him the truth. Just so of all other social relations. Just so of all the temper, spirit, and affections embarked in them. Kindness and not animosity, gentleness and not severity, forgiveness and not revenge, peace and not war, forbearance, equity, the love of our very enemies, and doing good to those who do hurt to us, have

been proved by positive experiment to be just as right and valuable as the Bible affirms. "Anger ruleth in the bosom of fools;" and you have but to look upon the man of anger to know it is true. "Righteousness exalteth a nation;" and all the facts of history demonstrate the declaration.

The Bible takes a wide range. It is not its object to teach us astronomy; but when Job says of God, "He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing," you may challenge all the glasses and mathematics of the modern astronomy to convict him of error. It is not its object to teach us geology; but, while almost every year that passes explodes some geological assumption which accused the Bible and makes its authors ashamed of it, you can easily judge

what shall be the shameful end of the rest. But I need not spread out these premises any further. It would be easy to show that private life and public taste, literature, science, government, merchandise, politics, political economy, families, nations, plowing and sowing, living and dying, have all been most happy, and most right, just when they have been most in accordance with the doctrines laid down in the Bible. No man that I know of will hazard his reputation for intelligence and common sense by denying it. The thing is undeniable. So far as mankind by any power, observation, or experience can *test* the Bible, so far they do *positively find it true*.

These are the premises. What is the conclusion? The Bible *says* it is the Word of God. If it is not, then the Bible is an impostor and a liar! But how is this? how

can you dispose of these premises? On what grounds are you accustomed to discredit a witness as false? You can not convict the Bible of any falsehood; and so far as you can in any way test it, the test proves its truth. When you have positively seen and experienced its truth, at home and abroad, in infancy and age, in peace and war, in respect to your heart, your temper, your conscience, your wife and children, your neighbors and magistrates, your hopes and fears, your buying and selling, your living, and all that you have seen of dying; when in all this you have not been able to convict it of an error, or even an extravagance; when you find it has been truthful to you all along and in everything so far as you have been able to test its truthfulness in any way, — by your heart, by your conscience, your reason, your eyes,

your ears, your tears or smiles, your victories or defeats, — when in all this, this wide chapter of experience, observation, and intelligence, you have found the Bible invariably, strangely, severely truthful, — how is this? — are you going to turn round and pretend to impeach its veracity in respect to those other things which your eyes and your experience can not yet reach? After it has told you truth and nothing but truth, over such extensive ranges of things that concern you, does it become you as a reasonable being to call in question its truth in reference to other extensive ranges of things that soon shall concern you in another world? Does it become you — without one item of evidence, without even any ground for a shade of suspicion — does it become you to be distrustful of a witness who never wavered, never hesitated or stam-

mered to you ever since you were born, and who, so far as you can prove him, has invariably told you the truth?

You are familiar with courts. You were a judge: I have no doubt you were a good one. If I were to be wrongfully arraigned and tried for crime, I should rejoice to see Judge —— upon the bench. Would your Honor caution the jury not to give much credit to such a witness? I know better. Your great mind is against it; all your past practice is against it.

Is not this known, and extensive, and some of it very strange truth-telling of the Bible, so far as your experience, observation, reason, eyes, cradle, or coffin can test it, a fair ground for the most ready and powerful presumption, at least, that it continues the same old truth-telling, when it goes on to *those other things*, where your

heart, conscience, and eyes can not yet reach, and tells you about God, about immortality, about heaven and hell?

In the case of such a witness in court, where is the judge who would cast a doubt over his testimony? Where is the juror whose verdict would linger? Yea, where is the advocate accustomed to perversions and impudence, who would venture a shadow of impeachment against the veracity of such a witness? The witness is positively known to have told the pure truth through a long and intricate story, and up to a particular point. Beyond that point there is nothing to test him. He goes on in the same style precisely, in the same tone of voice, with the same countenance and the same readiness, to fill out the story. He does it consistently with all that he has said before, and with all that is *known* to

be true. Therefore, in the name of judge, juryman, or lawyer, or any man of common sense, I ask *what shall break him down?* What shall impeach him? What stupidity and impudence shall be stupid and impudent enough to breathe a suspicion against him?

In your youth you were a traveler. You visited distant countries, and passed through some strange scenes. Not alone. Another journeyed with you, in whose companionship and communion you filled up many a sad and many a smiling hour. You returned from your wanderings. Your companion went on. Years have since rolled away, and their silent passage has half worn from your recollection many of the incidents of your early journeyings. And now your old companion has returned. And, to review the delight of past scenes, and to impart to

you some delight about scenes you did not visit with him, he gives you an account of his wanderings. You know he tells you truth, as far as you were with him: the old scenes freshen over your memory; the brooks laugh again; the gales breathe; the seas roar; the landscape smiles, and its mountains melt away into their fading blue. You are astonished sometimes at the accuracy of his recollections, just as you have sometimes been astonished at the Bible's descriptions about sin and wandering sinners; but your memory enables you to *know* that he tells you the truth. Indeed, you never knew him false, or had ground to suspect him. But he goes on with his story beyond the point where you left him, and up to where your memory can not now test him. With the same friendliness and simplicity he tells you of *other* countries he

has visited; of other cascades, mountains, caverns, and cities he has seen; other enjoyments and other exposures. And what! will you count his story false from the point where you left him? True, known to be true by the fidelity of your freshened memory, more faithfully true than you could have made it yourself, as it told your own hairbreadth escapes, your hours of weariness and rest; true, and known to be true up to that point: *on what principle*, I ask, will you call in question its truth, as it goes on to detail other wanderings, and does it in perfect consistency and similarity with all the rest? As the Bible carries out its story beyond the regions of a present experience, and, in what it says of the soul, of God, of the judgment and destinies beyond it, only completes, and completes consistently, the system commenced here,

and here demonstrated to be true all the way from an infant's breathing to an old man's expiring, most certainly its tested truthfulness, so far as in any way our powers can test it, furnishes at least a vigorous and resistless presumption, that, *found to be true on this side of the grave, it will be found true beyond it.* This presumption has so much to found and fortify it, that I think no reasonable man can set it aside without some strong proof of its error. Such proof can not be furnished.

It may not be easy in exact language to state the amount of this probable evidence for the truth of the Bible, nor need we. It will be enough for us if we consider that it is a very *extensive field* over which we do *know* that the Bible is true, that when it proceeds to those spiritual and eternal things wherein we can not now test it, all

its testimony there is in perfect *consistency* with all the rest, and only completes the system of its affirmed truth, and that there never was anything under the sun furnishing such an amount of *probable evidence* of its truth, which, after all, we have found out to be falsehood. On the ground of so much probable evidence, with nothing to contradict it, it would be just to demand the verdict of any jury, and any reasonable jury could not refuse it.

II.

THE BIBLE ADAPTED TO MAN'S NATURE AND WANTS.

I AM sure that the force of this species of evidence in the case will increase upon us the more we examine it. Our *consciousness*, as I have said, can test some of the truths of the Bible, some of its spiritual doctrines. We find the facts of a positive conscious experience to accord with them. Our consciousness is indeed limited at present. We can not now know by our experience what that man who died yesterday knows by his experience. We are still alive, but our consciousness can, and does, take a step further. If there are many things affirmed in the Bible which we can

not prove true by the facts of a positive *experience*, yet we may have *probable* evidence of their truth, by a positive consciousness within us. For example, the Bible professes to " bring life and immortality to light " for sinners. My positive experience can not yet test the truth of this offer ; for I am not yet dead, and in the heaven or hell mentioned in the Bible as realities. But my consciousness takes one step on this point. It does demonstrate to me that that *offer of immortality ought to be true ;* that my spirit *needs* it to be true ; that the offer fairly and perfectly comports with my fears, my hopes, my sins, with all that I know of the spirit within me. I can not take my stand where the bones are scattered by the grave's mouth, and " say to corruption, Thou art my father, and to the worm, Thou art my mother and my sister," if that

grave is to be the end of me. My soul needs an immortality. I know this, for I feel it. And this is, and has been, the feeling of human nature through all generations. The revelation of such an immortality *suits* me, — suits my want, my condition, my crumbling clay, my anticipated epitaph. Oh, if this life be all, "cursed be the day in which I was born"! — "if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." We want some security for the future. We were made so. This belongs to our very nature. And the Bible promise of an immortal life, therefore, *accords with my nature*.

This species of argument has an extensive sweep. By my own consciousness I know, as well as I know anything, that I need before God, if there is a God, a righteousness which I have not of my own. I

need pardon which I can not buy, and love from God, if there is a God, which I can not merit. And as the Bible reveals to me that pardon, that love, and that Christ crucified through whom they come, I know — by the testimony of my own consciousness I *do know* — that these revealed things are precisely what I need. As a creature of sins and sorrows, of sickness, pain, and weakness, of a thousand errors and imperfections, a wanderer from truth and soon to be a tenant of the tomb, I *do know* that I need just such a Christ as the Bible reveals to me, just such a God and Father, just such a home to look for — my Father's house above.

Thus my most sure and deep-seated consciousness does positively test the truth of the Bible thus far; namely, that its announced provision and grace and salvation

are exactly appropriate to my character and state. This certainly furnishes another broad ground of presumption that they are realities, — another extensive collection of probable evidences that the Bible is true. If these things are not true, they *ought* to be. My inmost soul feels they ought to be. My fears, my hopes, my sins, my coming adieu to all that is earthly, affirm they ought to be. If my limited experience as a mortal can not yet put to the test all that the Bible has said about that which is immortal, still, my vivid and certain consciousness does prove that it has spoken to me appropriately. This appropriateness of the revelation, found, as it is, in all the Bible doctrines which touch my inmost spirit and my eternity, constitutes a vast accumulation of probable evidence that the Bible is true. And when there is just no

evidence at all opposed to its truth, I am not afraid to demand the verdict of any human jury in its favor.

III.

THE BIBLE NOT THE WORK OF MAN.

THE *contents* of this Bible are such as to render it entirely an incredible thing that it is *the work of any mere man or set of men.*

This argument has so wide a sweep that it would take a large volume to exhaust it. I can only mention a few things, and only glance at those few.

Every man who attentively reads the Sacred Scriptures is pained or astonished, or both, that they make such declarations about *human sinfulness*, — about the atonement, and the necessity of being born again. The human heart is unfolded so perfectly — its pride, its ambition, and self-

ishness, their evil and their consequences are so pictured — that it becomes a sort of fixed feeling — a sort of irresistible impression, that these descriptions are not the work of man. Bad as man is, and disinclined to take the moral and spiritual advice the Bible gives him, it takes some time for him to divest himself of the solemn impression that God himself is speaking to him in the Bible, — an impression which originates very much in his intuitive conviction that none but the God who made him could describe his heart so well. He may, indeed, divest himself of this impression by time and unreasonableness and indulgence; but at first it is quick and powerful. He may be astonished at what the Scriptures tell him about himself, — his sin, depravity, and danger, — but all there is within him goes along with the record.

His conscience, his reason and fears, confirm it to him; and it costs him time and labor, and violations of reason and conscience, to wear away the confirmation. It is hard work for him to train himself up into the disbelief that it must be his God himself who speaks to him in the Bible. He may do it, if he will. The Bible *says* he can do it; and this is another proof of its truth, because we have often seen it done. He can harden his heart, and blind his eyes, and sear his conscience, and after a while he can sneer at his mother's prayers over his infancy and growing childhood, and laugh at his father's admonitions, and call his former impressions of early seriousness childish weaknesses. All this may be done. It has been done a thousand times. It is a memorable fact, too, that very many, if not most of those who have become in-

fidels, were at one time of their life (as themselves have told us) convicted sinners, if not seriously prayerful inquirers after salvation. "It hath happened unto them according to the true proverb, the dog has turned to his own vomit again, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire."

The early impression was the just one, the *true* one; as appears from the facts that unreasonableness, lack of consideration, and sin are indisputably the things which tend to wear it away; and that reflection, sobriety, and self-discipline are indisputably the things which tend to confirm it.

Men, mere unaided men, never have given such descriptions of the *depravity of human nature* as the Bible does. Indeed, they never wrote anything resembling these

descriptions, unless they were first instructed by the divine revelation, directly or indirectly. How came this about? How did it happen that men claiming to speak from God, like Moses and Isaiah and Jeremiah and Paul, all agree on the subject of man's homebred depravity, and other writers are all unlike them; and that these inspired writers not only produce such general conviction of their truth, but that that truth is from God? Why did not some other authors write in the same way? Why did not some sage of the East, or of Egypt, Greece, or Rome, spring up among the armies of their boasted philosophers, to tell the truth about man as plainly as Moses, David, or Paul, — or, if you please, to tell such falsehoods about him? You cannot account for the substance found in these Bible authors on any other supposi-

tion than that of a preter-human origin. If they were not inspired of God to tell the truth, the truth which they have told can not be accounted for.

The same may be said of the doctrine of atonement. It is as strange and wonderful a doctrine as infidels have ever affirmed it to be, — as far removed from any of the possible imaginings of men. It is utterly incredible that such a doctrine should ever have come from the coinage of the human brain. So far from lying within the compass of human reason to originate, human reason staggers when she attempts to comprehend its mighty significance. It is not *against* reason, but, like many other things which God does, yea, like God himself, it stretches above and beyond it. Moreover, aside from divine revelation, such a doctrine as that of the

atonement made by Christ to save sinners finds no resemblance among all the previous writings of men. The doctrine, therefore, bears the mark of God upon it.

So does the doctrine of the *resurrection of the dead.* Human reason never could have coined it; human imagination never conceived of it. It has the stamp of superhuman authorship.

So has the doctrine of the *Trinity.* Human reason may well wonder before it, and adore while it wonders; but no human reason or imagination unaided ever conceived anything resembling it.

The same may be said of *Christ's incarnation.* Such a thought was as much beyond men as heaven is higher than the earth. It is utterly incredible that these doctrines came from the artifice of man.

Equally incredible is it that men unaided

by any higher power should have drawn such a *character of God* as that contained in the Scriptures. The gods of the Greeks, Romans, Egyptians, Persians, Hindoos are infinitely inferior to the Jehovah of the Bible ; but, base and contemptible as they are, they are as respectable gods as men untaught by divine revelation have ever known anything about.

The *object* of the Bible, too, is as much above unaided man as its doctrines. Its one object is to prepare men for the kingdom of heaven, — not merely to give it to them. Other religions have had for their object some earthly good ; and if they have sometimes held out some faint and doubting promise of future reward to virtues cultivated here, they have never made future reward their first great object, and the things which they called virtue were any-

thing *but* virtue, and in respect to virtue itself no two of them could agree. They never insisted upon contempt for the world, humility, habitual piety, repentance, purity of heart, forgiveness of enemies, and the love of God as indispensable to future felicity.

The *character*, therefore, *formed by a believing reception and obedience of the Bible*, must be and is altogether and radically superior to the character formed by any other system. Men without the Bible never dreamed of such a character. A supreme love of a perfect God, and a universal benevolence never entered into their schemes. Even Tacitus could commend suicide. Even Seneca could advise to the murder of his mother, because she was too old and infirm to do good any longer, or have enjoyment. Gibbon has come near to the truth when he says that all those religious

systems which prevailed among the ancients were considered by the common people as equally true, by the philosophers as equally false, and by the magistrates as equally useful. The rulers wanted to keep the people in subjection, and therefore they invoked the assistance of the fear of the gods, — sometimes of the fears of futurity; and they did that even only when the fears of the present life would not suffice. So far from preparing the souls of men for felicity in heaven by making them holy here, their object was a merely earthly one, and all these ancient religions very much if not entirely failed in making men any better. Christianity has not failed. The practice of it is indeed too limited, and even among its disciples too imperfect. But the *system* is utterly above all human systems. If it were received and obeyed among all man-

kind, it would put a stop, in a single month, to more than half the miseries that afflict the world. We should have no more thefts and murders, no more drunkenness and debauchery, no more jails, no more gibbets, no more war, no more swindlers and duels, no more slavery, no more tyranny, and no more hatred, enmity, envy, and ill-will. Men would live happy and die happy. Such a system is not from man. It must be from God, and is worthy of him. It is so infinitely superior to everything that men have ever been known to compose, that it is utterly unreasonable to suppose that men ever made it. The contents of the Bible furnish full evidence that it is God's Word.

If any one should suggest, in opposition to this, the philosophy and dignified sentiments of such men as Plato and Pythagoras

and Socrates, as if such men were an indication that the human mind unaided could have formed the Bible, I would reply to this, —

1. It is extremely probable that these men *derived* almost the entire sum of all their correct ideas from the divine revelation itself. Tradition from the time of Noah may have handed down some truth, and would have preserved more, only that "men did not like to retain God in their knowledge." The Jews were scattered the world over, and carrying their knowledge derived from Moses and the prophets along with them. It would be strange if men as studious as Herodotus and Plato and Socrates and Pythagoras and Cicero did not pick up some of the Jewish doctrines of religion. The philosophers were travelers after knowledge. Herodotus traveled, Pythag-

oras and Plato traveled. One of them lived for seven years on Mount Lebanon. Could he have lived there so long and not learned much of the Jewish sacred books? It is therefore manifest that every one of these boasted philosophers may have received all the correct notions he had, either directly or indirectly, from the divine revelation; and therefore no correct reasoner will ever assume that these men are any proof or any indication at all that the unaided human mind ever could have produced such a book as the Bible.

2. The teachings of these sages were utterly inefficient for moral good. The very sages themselves were base, low, immoral men. No decent assembly in Christendom would endure even the mention of their crimes.

3. All they taught, all that can be raked

up and squeezed out of their writings, is not of so much theoretical or practical utility as these four words in the Bible: "There is one God."

There can nothing be produced from any confessedly human writings which furnishes an item of probability that mere unassisted human powers could have originated the Bible. The contents of the Bible are so much unlike the work of man, and so much above man, as to furnish strong evidence that it is from God. Men never could have devised such doctrines, such a deep spiritual religion, such prophecies proved true by fulfillment; and such a number of men never could have written so much and made it throughout so consistent, and a perfect system, not susceptible of improvement by all men in all time.

IV.

THE BIBLE BENEFICENT.

IT will not be denied that there is in the world an extensive class of men called Christians who affirm with truth that their dispositions, character, and conduct have been very essentially *made what they are* by their reception and attempted practice of the Christian religion. It may be true that many of them are only counterfeit Christians; for what good thing is there among men which is not sometimes counterfeited? It certainly is true that most of them are very imperfect, — not because their system is imperfect, but because they imperfectly obey it. Yet after all such abatements, it can not be

denied that if there are good men in the world they are to be found among these Christians; nor can it be denied that their attachment and submission to Christianity have contributed to *make* them good men; nor can it be denied that vast multitudes of other people would be rendered much better than they are by receiving and obeying the system of Christianity also; nor can it be denied that all the worst men in the community are practiced despisers of Christianity, not obeying its precepts, if even they acknowledge its truth; nor can it be denied that the honest reception of Christianity does universally and without any exception tend to make men good.

Now what shall we say of that system? It claims to be from God. If it is not, the system is a falsehood and an impious fiction, — an imposition. Suppose I call it so, and

what then is before me? A class of men, an extensive class, the best men in the world, the most trustworthy, most peaceful, upright, kind, honorable, benevolent, *made such by a mere falsehood, a base imposition!* If the Bible is not a divine revelation, then a system of lies has done more good among men than a system of truth! — an imposition — a sort of fraud upon human nature, whose very foundation has not a word of truth about it — makes better men, better friends, better neighbors, better citizens, subjects, and magistrates, than the pure truth (infidelity) ever did! And since all this is so, — since this Bible has done more good than the system of infidel truth which contradicts it, — I do not see *why* I ought not to *love* falsehood better than truth, and lend my lips to tell lies as fast as I can!

This will not do. Common sense must

be dismissed, or it can never be believed that a system of falsehood is the origin of virtue and felicity, and a system of truth the cause of immorality and misery. *Common sense knows better.* All sound reason knows better.

As any sensible man looks abroad upon society in a Christian country, he can not but see that the more the Bible is obeyed the better and happier men are; and, on the other hand, the more it is disobeyed the more evil and miserable men become. If the Bible is not the Word of God, these impostors, liars, have sent forth among men the most beneficial book that was ever written! and the benefit of it, too, very much depends upon men's believing an impudent, amazing falsehood; namely, that the Bible is the Word of God! For it must not be overlooked that the efficacy of the Bible

over men's hearts and lives comes from the fact that they receive it, as in truth it is, as the Word of God. Now it is contrary to all human reason that falsehood, a base forgery, should be such a good thing, — the most beneficial book in the world, — and its base authors the most beneficial men.

On what principle it is that common sense can not believe falsehood to be in itself and its effects more beneficial than truth, it may not be necessary now to inquire; but the fact is certain; and an infidel has a strange work before him when he would convince men that the highest virtue comes from believing a lie, a strange work before him when he would convince men that a system of falsehood, a counterfeit, a mere imposition, is very efficacious to promote the happiness of mankind. Common sense knows better. No man of any decency

will deny that the influence of the Bible, wherever it is received as the Word of God, positively does promote the highest virtue and the greatest felicity; not a family but it blesses, not a nation but it exalts, not a private individual but it makes him a better man. The observation of every intelligent man demonstrates this.

But if a skeptic wishes to look behind this *fact* and inquire for the *principle*, we are ready for him. We are as willing to reason as he is. And if he will not yield to the fact till he can see the principle demonstrated,—if he will not confess that what we have called common sense is right in his decision till we have explained and proved the principle on which common sense makes the decision, —we are ready for the explanation. Let him heed it. It is this:

From the very first operations of human reason among the things of human experience, all men do perceive and know that truth, correctness, is beneficial to them. The child that would be happy, knows that he must not mistake some other woman for his mother. The boy that loses his ball upon the playground, knows that he must look for it where it is: he must act upon *truth*, upon reality, if he would find it. So all through life. Error, mistake, falsehood, is not the thing which leads to happiness, nor is it the thing which leads to goodness. Through the whole range of human experiences, from the cradle and the playground up to the walks of mechanism and merchandise, of science, art, and legislation, and down to the bottom of the tree of life where the old man resigns his breath, men of observation and memory, all men of com-

mon sense, do see and know that truth is promotive of happiness and virtue, while error and falsehood have an opposite effect. This is a lesson of experience and observation. Common sense very much proceeds on this principle, — proceeds analogically in the most of its conclusions. And since it sees and experiences that error and falsehood do positively lead to unhappiness and vice, and that obeyed truth does positively lead to felicity and virtue, — since it sees and knows these things on every subject and on every spot of earth where it has known anything, it must and does draw the irresistible conclusion that anything which promotes felicity and virtue must be *true*, and that anything which promotes natural and moral evil must be *untrue*. This is common sense, and this is analogy.

Where, then, is the analogical reasoning,

where is the common sense of that man, who can believe the Bible a falsehood, since it makes men happier and better when they take it as God's Word? Knowing perfectly that the influence of truth promotes happiness in all other things, and knowing perfectly that the influence of the Bible as God's Word promotes happiness, on what principle, I demand, but the principle of a madman, the principle of a fool, can any man pretend that the beneficial Bible is not truth? That very madman, that very fool who pretends this, does himself in every other department hunt after truth as an important thing. He does it in law, in medicine, in mechanics, in agriculture, in all that concerns him and in all that he can think of. He does this on the principle and with the unwavering conviction that felicity and truth are linked together,—that

truth is the father of happiness. Never — not once — does he doubt, among all the fields of his thought, that correctness is promotive of happiness, that that which does promote happiness must be correct, till he comes to this one matter, — religion ; a matter which makes demands upon his heart and his habits, interfering with his criminal delights. A man, therefore, who can reject the beneficial Bible as untrue, must at once contradict analogy and contradict himself. He must stand over his Bible and say, " Truth, reality, correctness in everything else that I know anything about, leads towards happiness. Falsehood, error, in everything else that I know anything about, leads towards unhappiness. But here is an exception, — an amazing and far-reaching exception. This Bible promotes happiness invariably and everywhere, pub-

lic and private, from infancy to age, so far as its influence extends. But this Bible is untrue, an imposition, a cheat; it is not the Word of God! The great felicity it causes and the good character it forms are the effects of an unworthy imposition, of a lie! Analogy fails; analogy as a principle of reasoning is deceptive. I will use it no more!" Thus he must say. He can not avoid it.

Such a man, too, must contradict *himself*. He must continue his contemplation and say, "In all my life I have found both felicity and virtue promoted by truth. Truth, correctness, has been the means of good to me in my profession and in my intercourse with my neighbors. I never have found error safe, and never expected to feel it a safe thing to follow. I have always thought that men would be most happy by

knowing the truth and following it, whether digging for silver in the bowels of the earth, or aiming after some other benefit on its surface. I have always acted on this principle. But I will abandon it! I will act on it no longer! Curse the truth! This Bible promotes felicity and virtue, but it is a pack of lies! — it is not what it says it is, the Word of God! — it is an imposition, a cheat, a falsehood! The virtue it originates and the felicity it secures are the results of error and deception! Having acted all my life on the principle that truth is beneficial, that what leads to happiness must be correct, I will herein contradict all my common sense, all *my former self;* and while I know that all men on earth would be better and happier by obeying the Bible as truth from God, I will believe it to be and treat it as a system of falsehood, — a

deception upon men's souls!" Thus he must say; he can not avoid it. I leave it to any man's judgment, whether he is worthy of the reputation of common sense any longer.

V.

THE BIBLE LOVED BY THE GOOD, AND HATED BY THE BAD.

WE present a fifth argument, because it is possible that the mind of the reader of these pages will attempt to evade the force of the fourth, by affirming that we have assumed too much, when we have assumed as true what all Christians tell us; namely, that they are indebted mainly to the influence of the Bible over them for whatever of goodness or virtue they possess. It would be easy to demonstrate, however, that they are not mistaken in this. They all say so, and observation and all history confirm their words.

This is demonstration enough. We have not assumed anything.

But, be it so. Grant that these Christians are mistaken in attributing their goodness to the influence of God's Word over them. Then the argument will assume another form, but it will remain unshorn of its strength. Let us state it: we need not expand it.

No human being in ordinary society reaches the period of maturity without knowing that there are different classes of men. Some are good men; some are bad men. He knows this. No matter whence their different characters originated. Come whence they may, these different classes of men render very different treatment to a book that calls itself the Word of God. The one class receive it as such — honor it, reverence it, confess their solemn obligation

to obey it. The other class act differently. Few of them even attempt to obey it. Many of them neglect it. Some of them sneer at it as a weak and wicked imposture. This is the general fact, — visible, extensive, and indisputable.

Now, on these premises what will a reasonable mind conclude? Will a man say that these good men have been imposed upon by a book that is an impudent and horrible tissue of falsehood, while these bad men have had sense enough to detect the imposition and reject its pretenses? On what ground can he say it? Are the good men *weak* men, and the bad men all men of talents? Have the good men never examined the book a thousand-fold more than the others? Has their excellence of character rendered them liable to run into a most amazing mistake, and embark all

their hopes for time and eternity upon a mere fiction, an outrageous falsehood? Is this the exposure of virtue? Common sense knows better. When even a child beholds the good welcoming the Bible, — loving it, praying over it, commending it, — he has that within him which constrains him to believe that the Bible is no falsehood, no imposition. And when on the contrary he beholds the bad, all the worst men in community, not honoring the Bible or obeying it as God's Word, that fact does not weigh a feather with him to prove that it is not the Word of God; for he expects bad men to reject good things, and especially that good truth which reproves them. And if your child becomes a man, and suffers his common sense and not his evil passions to rule him, he will reason in the same manner still. It is a thing utterly incredible

that the best men should be the most easy and most ready to adopt an extensive system of falsehood. It is utterly incredible that the worst men should be the most eager and the first to detect and reject what is untrue. It is incredible that an impious imposition, a scheme of falsehood, should so fall in with the principles and preferences of good men, that they will be glad to receive it, honor, love, and obey it; while bad men are the first to unmask its imposition and reject it. Just as certainly as the excellence of the good commends itself to human reason, just so certainly that system which the good receive, and which accords with all the excellence there is in them (if it did not originate it), must be the system of truth, not of error. If this is not so, then error agrees with virtue as cause with effect; then falsehood is congenial with

excellence of character; then a bad man is the most ready promoter of truth in the world; then human virtue is the natural and eternal antagonist of truth! Believe this who can. Surely not a man of an unperverted judgment, — surely not a man of unbiased common sense.

VI.

THE BIBLE NOT SUSCEPTIBLE OF IMPROVEMENT.

IF the Bible is not the Word of God, it is fair to conclude, I suppose (as infidels are wont to maintain), that it is the work of mere men, its authors. It reveals a system of religion. This system contains many great fundamental truths or doctrines, some of them relating to God, some to man, some to human conduct, and some to the temper and spirit of the human soul. But whatever the system is, it was such from the time of the death of the last of the writers that *none of their human successors have been able to make any improvement in it, in a single one of its various parts.*

Now it is not to be believed that men eighteen hundred years ago, especially such men as the writers of the Bible, could have been able by any mere human talents to present such a system that *no* man could be found in all the succeeding centuries who has been able to make any improvement upon it. The science of morality, for example, is very extensive; but not one of all our thousand ethical writers has ever been able to show himself wiser than the poor fishermen of Galilee. All history and all the experience and observation of men have failed to enable any one among our armies of moral philosophers and deep metaphysicians to make a single step of advance beyond the works of such men as Matthew and John and Paul. Not only is there no demonstrable error in their writings (which can scarcely be said of any

other extensive ethical compositions of men), but these ancient writers saw so clearly the *whole of human duty* that no writer since has ever been able to explain the spirit of it any better, and even has scarcely been able to mention an item of conduct belonging to it which these ancient writers have not contrived to mention in their brief essays. Men have made improvements in other things, but not in this. The science of law has been improved, the science of mathematics, of chemistry, conchology, every human science perhaps, or with only two or three exceptions. But not one iota of new light has been flung upon the science of morality. The same may be said of theology. The character of God, his great moral and spiritual law, the service due to him, the just feelings towards him, — all these have re-

mained for centuries just where the authors of the Bible left them, — neither remodeled nor retouched by any subsequent genius. This is not the case with mere human things. If the divine writers (as we call them) had been so accurate in only a few points, the thing would not be so wonderful. But no point has been improved. The field of morality is very extensive. The spirit of it lies very deep ; but these ancient men told the whole so well, that all succeeding generations could tell it no better. This is full evidence that they " spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

VII.

THE BIBLE SYSTEM OF TRUTH PERFECT.

THE religious system of the Bible is in all its parts *absolutely perfect.* I affirm this on the ground that no human reason can point out the least defect. It has told everything rightly. Men have misunderstood it sometimes; the human heart has often recoiled from its enjoined humility, gentleness, forgiveness of enemies, and so on; but it is an amazing truth, after all, that the Bible system is a perfect system.

This is full evidence that its authors were not mere unaided men, but were inspired of God. For what else is there among all

human things which wears the stamp of absolute perfection? It is impossible for any reasonable man to believe, if he is unprejudiced, that a set of men should have been able, through their unassisted abilities, to form a perfect system of doctrines and duties, ranging from the infinitudes of God down to the various duties and inmost heart of man. If men have done this, it is a greater miracle than any one recorded in the Bible. Such men must have been something *more* than men.

VIII.

THE BIBLE NOT HUMAN IN ITS STYLE.

THE *style* of the Bible is not a human style. I do not allude to its literature, its taste, its sublimity, or anything which scholars have been accustomed to admire: I mean the *whole manner in which it teaches religion*, with the view of influencing men. And I am not afraid to affirm, in the presence of all that mankind have ever written, that the style of the Bible is evidently not human. What man would ever have conceived of propagating this religion by such strange books as those which we call Sacred? Some of them are historical, some preceptive, some

prophetical, some poetical. And history, poetry, prophecy, precept, promise, threatening, explanation, and exhortation are mixed up together, as if confusion reigned in the minds of the writers. The Ten Commandments constitute the only instance in the Bible of any attempt to systematize. I recollect no other, unless the Epistle to the Romans may be called so. Such a manner is not like men. They have never written in this style, with a view of propagating their opinions. Once, in the days of my ignorance and skepticism, this confusion, or strange style of the Bible, appeared to me unworthy of God (if there was a God), and unworthy of wise men. But I have since found out my folly. I see now that this strange style of the Bible is perfectly adapted to its purpose ; namely, to instruct, convict, and convert men, and train them for the

revealed heaven. Its unceasing *repetitions* are necessary. Men need to have the same truth reiterated to them again and again, and especially need to have it come out in its *different connections*. Its poetry suits some minds, its history others. Its parables and its logic, its lamentations and its promises, have a perfect adaptation to the various tastes and minds and conditions of men. Its destitution of analysis makes it appropriate to the boor over his mattock. Its simplicity and repetitions and unbounded variety make it appropriate to childhood, when the mind will not dwell long at a time on the same thought, or dive into the depth of any careful generalization. So in respect to a thousand other peculiarities. They are *perfectly adapted to man*, to his heart, from infancy to age, in the hut or palace, in the field or the hall of

science. The event has proved this. Men by the thousand and tens of thousands have found it so. Still, it is, as I think, a most manifest reality that this style of the Bible is not a human style. Men never have written so. It is not their manner. The Bible is evidently an inspired book, because the whole manner of its religious teaching is altogether above all the unaided wisdom of the human mind. I will not expand the argument.

IX.

THE BIBLE WRITTEN BY GOOD AND WISE MEN.

THE Bible was written by men. They must have been good men or bad ones. Evidently they were alike. They agree: through the whole system they agree. They all give the same representations of the character of God, and enjoin the same duties upon men. They were evidently alike, and must have been good men or bad ones. They *say* that the Bible is the Word of God. Bad men might have said such a thing untruly; for bad men will, sometimes, lie. But it is utterly unreasonable to suppose that bad men composed such a book, — a book of untruth, if it is not the Word of God. For —

1. Bad men *would* not have written it if they could. The whole system itself condemns such an imposition as palming off upon the world, for the Word of God, a book which is not such; and if bad men have done it, they have done what bad men were never yet known to do in any other case; namely, have written an extensive system of unequaled purity of morals, — a system which throughout condemns themselves, condemns their very writing it, and calling it "the Word of the Lord." It does not agree with the taste, character, and habits of such bad men to write such a book. We have many of their writings: none of them resemble the Bible. If the conscience of a bad man could allow him to make such a forgery, his taste never would. The idea is absurd. The whole of it is unlike him. Certainly it is not less than a ridiculous

absurdity to suppose that bad men composed David's Psalms, Isaiah's prophecies, the Ten Commandments, and called them the Word of God when they knew it was false.

Nothing could be more opposite to the taste or preferences of bad men than to sit down and write extensive pages of religion like those in the Bible. Indeed, bad men can scarcely be persuaded to read them. Especially bad men would not have written these things when the writing was likely to cost them their heads. This was the end of some of them: and while they were writing and preaching their pack of lies, they knew it was coming. Ridiculous!

2. Bad men *could not* have written the Bible, if they would.

It is impossible that bad men should have written a book about God and eternity and

the soul and duty which commands the highest wonder and admiration of the most profoundly religious men on earth. If bad men could have known sinners well enough to write it, they could not have known God well enough to write it. Such men in the position of the writers of the Bible could have had no conceivable motive to induce them to pen their forgeries. It cost Isaiah his life ; it put Jeremiah in prison ; five times it gave Paul forty stripes save one. Bad men could not have stuck to their motiveless falsehoods at such a cost. Bad men, wishing to impose upon the world (and themselves gaining nothing by it), could never have given the most rational and sublime description of God, and the most pure and perfect system of morality, the world ever saw. The idea is absurd. It is not to be believed that base men, coining a system

of falsehood and calling it God's Word, — living in different generations spread over almost two thousand years, — without concert with one another, and often one of them ignorant of what the others had written, — should ever have been able to make an extensive system of falsehood so uniform and consistent; without contradiction and without a jar betwixt them. Such a thing would be utterly beyond the power of bad men. I challenge the whole history of criminal jurisprudence to show anything like it. To produce such a law as that of the Ten Commandments, or such a discourse as that of Christ's Sermon on the Mount, such a prayer as the Lord's Prayer, or such a treasury of religious logic and depth as Paul's Epistle to the Romans, as much transcends a bad man's power as the lifting of a mountain transcends the power of

a child. Bad men never had moral and spiritual depth enough to even *understand* well the Bible: how impossible for them, then, to make it! They could not if they would. Sooner a thousand-fold could a tyro of twelve years of age have written Blackstone, or Chitty, or Starkie on Evidence. The Bible, then, must have been written by good men, — men who were honest, — men who thought they were telling the truth, — when they said it was the Word of God.

But good men may have been deceived, it is said. Very well, let us take that supposition. Call the divine writers deluded enthusiasts, honest fanatics, who thought they were inspired, but were mistaken. Examine this supposition.

1. There is *no mark* of delusion, of an excited imagination, misled and crazy, in all their writings. They are cool, careful,

connected, logical, and sober, from first to last. This is not the style of enthusiasts, fanatics, wild and deluded people, dreamers, who take imaginations for realities. We have had other men claiming to be inspired, but they never wrote a chapter without exposing a fanatic's imagination or a madman's brains. In the Bible writers we have not a mark of deluded enthusiasm, or of any of the extravagances of a wild and erring imagination.

2. Deluded good men, mere enthusiasts, never could have *agreed* in their writings as these divine writers agree (about twenty in the Old Testament and nine or ten in the New), — unknown to one another, — living in different ages, extending over near two thousand years. Others, known to be enthusiasts (if they were good men deluded), have told each his own story, and the story

of each one clashes with the story of every other. In no court, before no jury, on earth, could you convict Moses and Isaiah and Jeremiah and David and Paul and Matthew of being out of their wits and fit for a lunatic asylum. David does not sing like a madman. The Ten Commandments do not look like the dream of an enthusiast.

But I need not pursue their defense. The idea that the divine writers were good men deluded, never could enter the mind of any man on account of anything contained in their writings. Such a pretense is an unreasonable come-off, an unfair assumption, with nothing at all to sustain it.

The sacred writers, therefore, must have been *good* and *sane* men. Being such, they must have told the sober truth when they penned their books, and called them the Word of God.

X.

THE BIBLE PROVED DIVINE BY PROPHECY.

THE prophecies demonstrate the inspiration of the Bible. God only can foretell things; for example, the captivity, the fall of Jerusalem, the name of Cyrus two hundred years before he was born and what he would do, the dispersion and present condition of the Jews, and the coming and crucifixion of Jesus Christ. The prophecies are very extensive. They relate to Tyre, Sidon, Nineveh, Babylon, Jerusalem, Egypt, etc., etc. They are very minute. That they have been fulfilled is as much demonstrated as any historical fact can be; and that they were written before the ful-

fillment, is as much demonstrated to us as that Demosthenes or Cicero wrote the orations called by their names. Look at the Jews now, and then read the prophecies respecting them, uttered, beyond dispute, hundreds of years since. It is *impossible* that men unassisted could ever have foretold so exactly their state, as we find it to be, among all nations, — a "people scattered and peeled, a byword and a hissing."

I only mention the argument. If it is desired, I will expand it, and show its force.

XI.

THE BIBLE CORROBORATED BY GEOGRAPHY.

GEOGRAPHY furnishes almost a demonstration of the inspiration of the sacred authors. Horeb, Edom, Sinai, Egypt, with rock and river, vale and mountain, still prove the accuracy of Scripture. At the present moment old Nineveh is sending out her long-buried records, every one of which is a witness for the Bible's truth. I only mention the argument.[1]

[1] See Note A, p. 100.

XII.

THE BIBLE CONFIRMED BY HISTORY.

HISTORY sends in all her ancient volumes to bear testimony for the Bible. Tacitus, Pliny, Josephus, the whole long catalogue, speak just as we should expect them to speak if the Bible were known to be true. The Jews still practice circumcision, etc.; and at any time it would have been an impossibility to persuade such a people that their nation had always been accustomed to observe their rites, that they had received them from their fathers, and thus foist a burdensome and costly ceremonial upon them at any period of their history. Aside from some confessed and demonstrated

authority greater than man, such a religion never could have secured its acceptance. No human being can give any rational account for the existence of the Jewish theocracy, sabbaths, sacrifices, ceremonies, aside from the doctrine of the divine authority of the Bible.

I only mention the evidence. It is too broad a range for me to do more, unless desired.[1]

Now, my honored friend, allow me the liberty to beg of you to contemplate these things with all candor. I certainly wish to do you all honor. I respect your great mind, your frankness, your fearlessness before men. But I am sure you have erred on the subject of religion, and I am deeply and sincerely sorry. You stand now just

[1] See Note B, p. 103.

on the borders of time. Very soon your measure of life will be filled up, and you will be ushered into another world. Pardon me, if I urge you to believe in that Christ who has brought life and immortality to light, and commit to him your dying body and your immortal soul.

I pray my God for the blessings of his eternal love upon you.

With great respect and affection,

Yours, truly,

I. S. SPENCER.

NOTES.

THE narrow limits to which the author of the foregoing letter was necessarily confined, prevented him from adducing at length the facts to which he refers. We subjoin a few of these, which may serve as a specimen of the evidence mentioned.

NOTE A, p. 96.

"The geographic notices contained in the books of Moses are of the most veracious character, stamping the whole narration with an unmistakable air of authenticity. And this, it may be remarked, is an argument to which modern research is perpetually adding fresh weight.

"For instance, if we look to the geography, we shall find that till within these few years, 'Esech and Accad and Calneh in the land of

Shinar, Calah and Resen in the country peopled by Asshur, Ellasai, and Ur of the Chaldees,' were mere names; and beyond the mention of them in Genesis, scarcely a trace was discoverable of their existence.

"Recently, however, the mounds of Mesopotamia have been searched, and bricks and stones buried for near three thousand years have found a tongue, and tell us exactly where each of these cities stood, and sufficiently indicate their importance.

"Again, the power of Og, and his 'threescore cities, all fenced with high walls, gates, and bars, besides unwalled towns a great many,' in such a country as that to the east of the Sea of Galilee, whose old name of Trachonitis indicates its barrenness, seemed to many improbable; but modern research has found in this very country a vast number of walled cities still standing, which show the habits of the ancient people, and prove that the population at one time must have been considerable.

"So the careful examination that has been

made of the valley of the Jordan, which has resulted in a proof that it is a unique phenomenon, unlike anything elsewhere on the face of the whole earth, tends greatly to confirm the Mosaic account that it became what it now is by a great convulsion; and by pious persons, will, I think, be felt as confirming the miraculous character of that convulsion. Commander Lynch gives the following account of the impression made upon himself and his friends, by their careful examination of the river Jordan and the lake in which it ends: 'It is for the learned to comment on the facts which we have laboriously collected. Upon ourselves, the result is a decided one. We entered upon this sea with conflicting opinions. One of the party was skeptical, and another, I think, a professed unbeliever of the Mosaic account. After twenty-two days' close investigation, if I am not mistaken, *we were unanimous in the conviction of the truth of the scriptural account* of the destruction of the cities of the plain!'

"Above all, perhaps, the absence of any counter evidence — the fact that each accession to our

knowledge of the ancient times, whether geographic or ethnic — helps to remove difficulties, and to produce a perpetual supply of fresh illustrations of the Mosaic narrative; while fresh difficulties are not at the same time brought to light, is to be remarked as an argument to candid minds for the historic truth of the narrative, the force of which can scarcely be over estimated. All tends to show that we possess in the Pentateuch, not only the most authentic account of ancient times that has come down to us, but a history absolutely and in every respect true." —*Rawlinson's "Historic Evidences,"* pp. 75–77.

NOTE B, p. 98

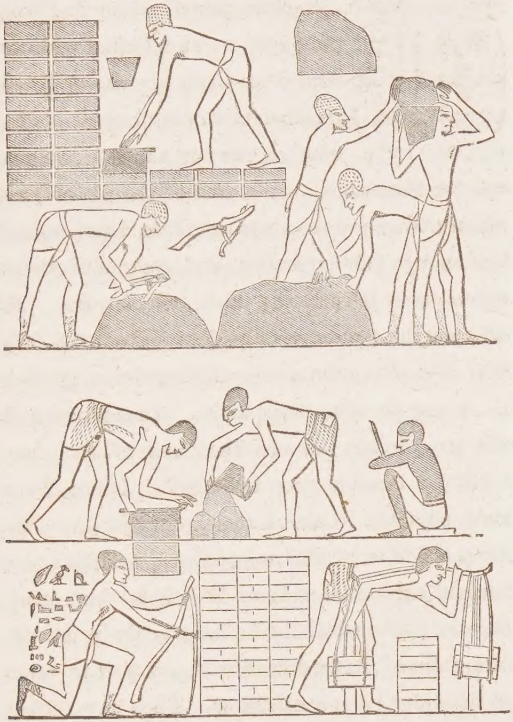
The monuments of Egypt afford remarkable evidence of the truth of the Mosaic narrative.

On the great obelisk of Karnak, cut with the most elegant art from rose-colored granite, is found a royal name, enclosed, as is usual, in two oval rings, which reads in the hieroglyphic language, *Makarra Numt Amun.* It is the name of a female monarch, to whom is given the title

"Pharaoh's daughter." Many circumstances conspire to show that this was the royal princess who had compassion on the infant Moses, and who, when he was grown to manhood, would have adopted him as her son and heir, had he not "chosen affliction with the people of God rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." Her maiden name was *Hatasu;* the former appearing to have been her royal or official name. If old enough to have rescued Moses from the bulrush ark in his infancy, she must have reached middle age at the time of his arrival at manhood, and may have already ascended the throne of her father.

Her successor, *Thothmes III.*, is believed to have been the Pharaoh that oppressed the Hebrews. The word Pharaoh (*Ph-rah*) is the common title of the Egyptian sovereigns — meaning the sun. Near Medinet Abou is the tomb of his architect, *Rek-sha-re*, who has the title "Superintendent of the Great Buildings," to King Thothmes III. On the walls of this tomb is the

remarkable painting following, representing the Hebrews at work making brick.



"Their physiognomy," says Mr. Osburn, one

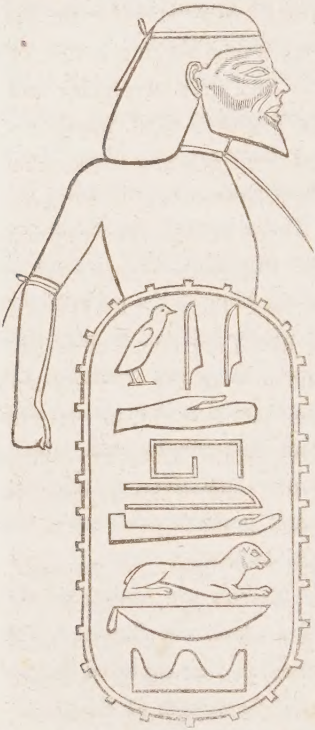
of the most learned investigators of Egyptian antiquities, "it is impossible to mistake. They are engaged in the labor described in the Bible (Exod. i. 14); their bodies are splashed with the clay, and their service is obviously exacted with rigor." The Egyptian task master, with his baton, sits by, overlooking the work, and ready to enforce obedience. In a part of the picture, not given above, are seen two of these functionaries beaten by their superiors, and compelled themselves to perform the task which they had allowed the bondmen to neglect (Exod. v. 6, 14). The Egyptians are clearly distinguished by their color and peculiar head-dress. The superior is not improbably the architect himself, in whose tomb the incident was delineated. It was, for a time, objected to the Mosaic narrative, that the Egyptian monuments are of *stone*, not brick; but further explorations have laid open vast structures of brick, which, being baked only in the sun, had chopped straw mixed with the clay in order to strengthen the consistency. The straw is often found in very small quantities, as if there had

been difficulty in procuring it (Exod. v. 12). Some of these bricks have been brought to this country, with the name of Thothmes III. stamped upon them. In this painting the inscription explains the subject to be 'Captives brought by Pharaoh to build the temples of the great gods.'"

It is not surprising that no records should have been made of the marvelous events attending the deliverance of the Hebrews and the overthrow of Pharaoh (probably Amenoph IV.) in the Red Sea. A disaster so humbling to the pride of the monarchy would be gladly suffered to pass into oblivion. Nevertheless, there are traditions recorded of events which seem as if disguised narratives of that great catastrophe, and which, though not conclusive in themselves, yet afford in their relatives no small probable evidence to the truthfulness of the Bible history.

In the temple of Karnak are sculptured the names and triumphs of *Amunmai Sheshonk*, who was Shishak, the monarch that captured Jerusalem in the fifth year of Rehoboam (1 Kings, xiv. 25). Among the captives before him is one des-

ignated as "King of Judah," of which the cut below is a copy. It shows a person wearing a beard, which was characteristic of the Jews, with a rope around his neck, his arms bound behind him, and in the oval underneath, the name in hieroglyphics, already specified. This name affords a convenient occasion for giving our readers a slight idea of the mode of reading these mysterious characters.



A hieroglyphic is properly a *picture* of the object or action to

be described. In its simplest idea, it represents said objects; thus, a man bending down, denotes the act of supplication; a man standing on his head, means to invert; a man making a vase of clay, to create, etc. But, in a secondary and more common use, the picture is used simply as a *letter;* namely, the letter which is first in the name of the picture. In English, this would be to represent the letter A by an ant, because the word ant begins with that letter. B might be represented by bull, C by cat, D by dog, etc. The word BAD would thus be spelled by writing the pictures of a bull, an ant, and a dog, one after another. The *order* is not material; from left to right, or right to left, or from top downward. Thus explained, we may easily read the name which appears, as above, among the captives of Shishak.

First, at the top and right hand, are two reeds, which stand for i i, or ī long; next to it is a young duck, which is ū, or ou. The open hand below (from *tot*, hand) is t or d; the next figure (called a meander) is h; the loop is m; the arm and hand (from *aa*, the arm) is a; the lion (from

labou, lion) is l; the figures underneath, a bowl with a handle, is k. The last character (a hill between two valleys) is not a letter, but a figure standing for *country*, and is designed to show that it was not the person of the king mentioned, but his country, which was captured. The name then reads IOUDHMALK; *i.e.*, Judah-Melek, King of Judah, his kingdom. — *Compiled from "Ancient Egypt" by G. Trevor, Canon of York.*

"The Assyrian monarch who appears in Scripture as most probably the successor of Sargon, is Sennacherib, whom the monuments show to have been his son. Two expeditions of this prince against Hezekiah are related; and each of them receives a very striking confirmation from a profane source. The sacred writers tell us that on the first occasion, Hezekiah, having thrown off the allegiance which the kings of Judah appear to have paid to Assyria, at least from the time of Ahab's message to Tiglath-Pileser, 'Sennacherib, king of Assyria, came up against all the fenced cities of Judah and took them; and Hez-

ekiah, king of Judah, sent to the king of Assyria to Lachish, saying: 'I have offended; return from me: that which thou puttest upon me I will bear; and the king of Assyria appointed unto Hezekiah, king of Judah, three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold.'

"The annals of Sennacherib contain a full account of this campaign. 'And because Hezekiah, king of Judah,' says Sennacherib, 'would not submit to my yoke, I came up against him, and, by the force of arms and the might of my power, I took forty-six of his strong fenced cities; and of the smaller towns which were scattered about, I took and plundered a countless number. And from these places, I took and carried off as spoil, two hundred thousand one hundred and fifty people, old and young, male and female, together with horses and mares, asses and camels, oxen and sheep, a countless multitude. And Hezekiah himself I shut up in Jerusalem, his capital city, like a bird in a cage; building towers around the city to hem him in; and raising banks of earth against the gates, so as to prevent

escape. . . . Then upon this Hezekiah there fell the fear of the power of my arms, and he sent out to me the chiefs and the elders of Jerusalem *with thirty talents of gold*, and eight hundred talents of silver, and divers treasures, a rich and immense booty. All these things were brought to me at Nineveh, the seat of my government; Hezekiah having sent them by way of tribute, and as a token of his submission to my power.'

"It is needless to particularize the points of agreement between these narratives. The only discrepancy is in the amount of the silver which Sennacherib received; and here we may easily conceive either that the Assyrian king has exaggerated, or that he has counted in a portion of the spoil, while the sacred writer has merely mentioned the sum agreed to be paid as tribute." —*Rawlinson's "Historic Evidences,"* pp. 119, 120.

The following is an interesting instance of confirmation of the scriptural narrative, in a point upon which inaccuracy has been charged. It is claimed that, in the account by Daniel of the fall

of Babylon, the statement that Belshazzar, who was then overthrown, was the last king, is utterly irreconcilable with undoubted facts learned from profane history.

"Of the son of Neriglissar, who was a mere child, and reigned but a few months, Scripture certainly contains no trace. Whether his successor, the last native king of the Canon, whose name is there given as Nabonadius, and who appears elsewhere as Nabannidochus, Nabonnedus, or Labynetus, — whether this monarch has a place in the scriptural narrative or not, has long been a matter of dispute among the learned. That there is no name in the least resembling Nabonadius in the Bible, is granted. But it has been by many supposed that that prince must be identical with Daniel's Belshazzar — the last native ruler mentioned in Scripture.

"The great diversity, however, of the two names, coupled with the fact that in every other case of a Semitic monarch, — whether Assyrian or Babylonian, — the Hebrew representative is a new expression of the vernacular term, has al-

ways made this theory unsatisfactory; and Rationalists, finding no better explanation than this of the acknowledged difficulty, have been emboldened to declare that Daniel's account of Belshazzar is a pure invention of his own; that it *contradicts* Berosus, and is an unmistakable indication of the unhistorical character which attaches to the entire narrative.

"It was difficult to meet the arguments of these objectors in former times. Not only could they point to the want of confirmation by any profane writer of the name Belshazzar, but they could urge further 'contradictions.' Berosus, they could say, made the last Babylonian monarch absent from the city at the time of its capture by the Persians. He spoke of him as taken prisoner afterward at Borsippa, and as then not slain, but treated with much kindness by Cyrus. Thus the two narratives of the fall of Babylon appeared to be wholly irreconcilable, and some were driven to suppose two falls of Babylon, to escape the seeming contrariety.

"But out of all this confusion and uncertainty a

very small and simple discovery, made a few years since, has educed order and harmony in a very remarkable way. It is found that Nabonadius, the last king of the Canon, associated with him on the throne, during the later years of his reign, his son, *Bil-shar-uzur*, and allowed him the royal title.[1]

"There can be little doubt that it was this prince who conducted the defense of Babylon, and was slain in the massacre which followed upon the capture; while his father, who was at the time in Borsippa, surrendered, and experienced the clemency which was generally shown to fallen kings by the Persians.

"If it be still objected that Belshazzar is, in Scripture, not the son of Nabonadius, but of Nebuchadnezzar, and of the Nebuchadnezzar who carried off the sacred vessels from Babylon, it is enough to reply, — first, that the word 'son' is used in Scripture not only in its proper sense,

[1] Sir H. Rawlinson made this important discovery, in the year 1854, from documents obtained at Mugheir, the ancient Ur.

but also as equivalent to 'grandson,' or indeed any descendant; and, secondly, that *Bil-shar-uzar* (or Belshazzar) may have been the issue of this marriage. A usurper in those days commonly sought to strengthen himself in the government by an alliance with some princess of the house, or branch, which he dispossessed."— *Rawlinson's "Historic Evidences,"* pp. 138, 140.

"The period with which we have been dealing, from the revolt of Jeroboam to the Babylonish captivity, is one of comparative light. We possess, it is true, no continuous history of it besides that which the sacred volume furnishes; but we have abstracts of the writings of Berosus and Manetho, which contained the annals of Egypt and Babylon during the space; we have considerable fragments of the Tyrian histories of the time; and in the latter portion of it, we begin to enjoy the advantage of those investigations which the inquisitive Greeks pushed into the antiquities of all the nations wherewith they became acquainted. Above all, we possess the cotempo-

rary records — often in a very copious form — of all the great Assyrian monarchs whose reigns fell within the periods in question, while we derive likewise a certain amount of information from the monuments of Egypt. All these sources have been examined, and all have combined to confirm and illustrate the scriptural narrative at almost every point where it was possible — or at any rate where it was probable — that they would have a bearing upon it.

"The result is a general confirmation of the entire body of leading facts, — minute confirmation occasionally, — and a complete absence of anything that can be reasonably viewed as serious discrepancy. A few difficulties — chiefly chronological — meet us; but they are fewer in proportion than are found in the profane history of almost any remote period; and the faith must be week indeed to which they prove a stumbling-block.

"Generally throughout this whole period there is that 'admirable agreement' which Niebuhr observes upon toward its close between the pro-

fane records and the accounts of Scripture. We have not for the most part endeavored, by any labored efforts, to harmonize the two : their accord is potent and striking, and is sufficiently shown by a mere juxtaposition of passages.

The monarchs themselves, the order of their names, their relationship where it is indicated, their actions so far as noticed, are the same in both the Jewish and the native histories; while these present likewise, here as elsewhere, numerous points of agreement, connected with the geography, religion, and customs of the various nations. As discovery proceeds, these points of agreement are multiplied; obscurities clear up; difficulties are solved; doubts vanish." — *Rawlinson's* "*Historic Evidences*," pp. 127, 128.

"We have found that the historical books of the New Testament are the productions of contemporaries and eye-witnesses, — that two at least of those who wrote lives of Christ were his close and intimate friends, while the account of the early church given in the Acts was written by a

companion of the apostles, — that the truth of the narrative contained in these writings is evidenced by their soft, simple, and unexaggerated tone, and by their agreement, often undesigned, with each other, — that it is further confirmed by the incidental allusions to it which are found in the speeches of the apostles, and in their epistolary correspondence with their converts, — that its main facts are noticed, so far as it was to be expected that they would be noticed, by profane writers; while a comparison of its secondary or incidental facts with the civil history of the times, as otherwise known to us, reveals an agreement which is at once so multitudinous and minute as to constitute in the eyes of all who are capable of weighing historical evidence, an overwhelming argument in favor of the authenticity of the whole story, — that the narrative was accepted as simple truth soon after it was published, in most parts of the civilized world; and this not by the vulgar only, but by men of education and refinement, and of good worldly position, — that it was received and believed at the time when

the truth of every part of it could be readily tested, by hundreds of thousands, notwithstanding the prejudices of education, and the sacrifices which its acceptance involved, — and, finally, that the sincerity of these persons' belief was tested in many cases in the most searching of all possible ways, by persecutions of the cruelest kind, and triumphantly stood the test, — so that the Church counted her martyrs by thousands. All this together — and it must be remembered that the evidence is *cumulative* — constitutes a body of proof such as is seldom producible with respect to any events belonging to remote times; and establishes beyond all reasonable doubt the truth of the Christian story. — *Rawlinson's "Historic Evidences,"* p. 226.

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